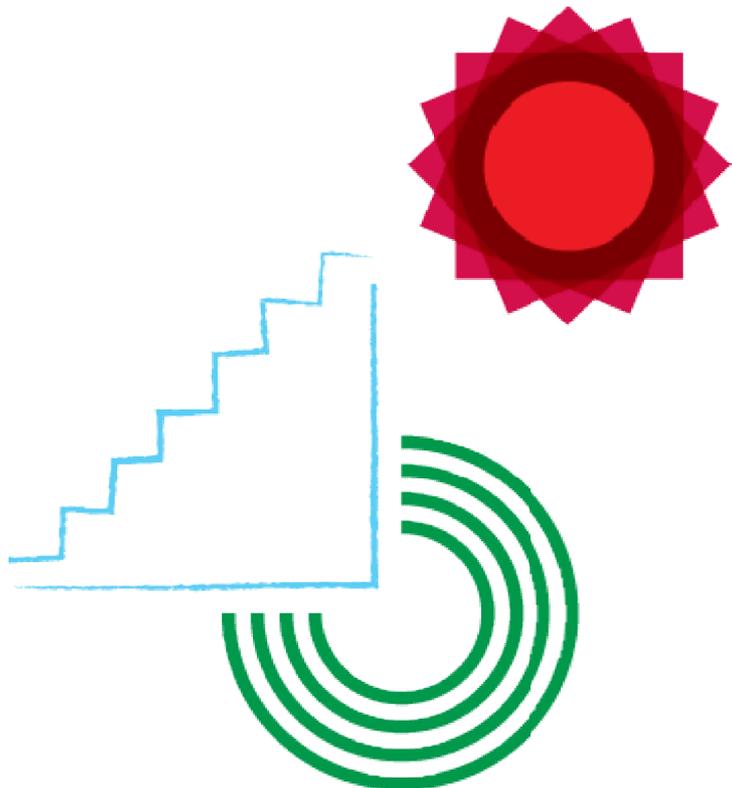




ENGAGE  
FOR  
SUCCESS

# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AT RUNSHAW COLLEGE

Case Study



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## Our story

Runshaw College is a Tertiary College in Lancashire, sited between a moss and a housing estate between Leyland and Chorley. It is a Beacon College, outstanding in its last three inspections. 4739 16-19 year olds were enrolled full time in October 2011.

Runshaw guarantees a place to every school leaver in Chorley and South Ribble. Approximately 4000 students are studying a choice of A Levels (over 40 subjects in any combination) and Advanced Vocational Courses (over 20 full time courses) with the other studying at lower levels. Runshaw College is oversubscribed but prioritises applicants by school of origin, not ability.

## Achievements

Success rates (achievement x retention) at Runshaw are better than at all but one college in the country at 93%. Achievement is 100%. The added value in 2011 based on qualifications on entry, was second only to one college in the country and the points per entry at 245 beat most schools and colleges in the country including many public schools.

At Runshaw, pupils achieve equally well in A Level and Advanced Vocational study. High grades (A\* to B) at A Level are 70.4% including 37% A grades. 86.3% progressed to university in 2011. 18 students have just received offers from Oxford and Cambridge. 77% Advanced Vocational pupils achieved the highest grade of DDD (equivalent to AAA at A Level) with 83.5% progressing to university in 2011. In total 1524 students progressed to university in 2011. 67 alone went on to study Law Degrees.

Alongside this over 1000 pupils are volunteering in their communities (including back in their previous schools), the many sports teams mean the college has topped the North West league tables for 11 years. The Performing Arts students had a 7 day run at the Edinburgh Festival in Agamemnon this year. Runshaw is the largest centre in the North West for the Duke of Edinburgh Award achieving many gold awards each year.

## The Leadership Journey

Runshaw achieved modestly until the mid-1990s when it embarked on a programme of culture change for which employee engagement was fundamental. Not only staff satisfaction but also overall performance began to improve as these changes were embedded. In 2003 Runshaw won the coveted European Business Excellence Award (awarded by the European Foundation for Quality Management) in Helsinki for the entire public sector (not just education) and additionally it was given a special award for 'Leadership and Constancy of Purpose'. This award was

followed up with the publication of a guide for the sector on the 'Runshaw Way – Valued Driven Management'. In 2008 Runshaw was the first organisation to achieve maximum success in the Investors In People Gold Award. The college leadership are driven by a belief that if staff are proud to subscribe to the mission and ethos of the college and they understand how their work contributes to the strategy and success of the college then their satisfaction at work will be greater and business performance will improve.



### **Culture Management through Employee Engagement**

At Runshaw the culture is therefore built on an agreed mission sustained by negotiated values to which all staff agree to work. Its recent strategy statement articulates

“Runshaw College is committed to creating a positive culture where information is shared and effective consultation occurs on a range of relevant issues to enable staff to genuinely contribute to the decision making process. An effective communications strategy is integral to harness the expertise of all staff and create a shared sense of purpose and vision to implement the College’s strategic objectives”

The Staff Charter indicates that “Staff can expect:

- To be informed of the College’s and team objectives on a regular basis
- Where practicable to be consulted and involved in changes which affect them and understand the reasons behind them
- To be empowered with the freedom to act within their area of responsibility, and to encourage participation, innovation and delegation of decision making
- To express their views, and in doing so, make a difference to the work of the College”

Strategies employed to achieve this include

- The involvement of staff in the selection arrangements for new staff
- The weekly publication of a “Staff Update”, usually a 16 page magazine about the life of the college and its environment, which celebrates successes, manages the ‘grapevine’ and creates a strong sense of belonging, pride and parity of esteem.
- A termly briefing cascaded to all staff and evaluated by them. This incorporates key messages and strengthens the shared sense of mission, vision and collective purpose, fostering a culture of open communication.

- A meeting with the Principal for all new staff to communicate the College mission, vision and expectations.
- The Principal addressing all staff at least three times a year with a focus on progress and success.
- Staff Governors who are elected to bring a staff perspective to the Board.
- Equality and Diversity Champions who volunteer to inform strategic planning for our core value of creating unity and equality of opportunity through valuing diversity.
- The College Management Team meeting monthly and holding two day conferences each year to ensure they are one united team with agreed 'ground rules' and a stake in collective responsibility.
- Staff Surveys including annual satisfaction surveys to enable support teams to self-assess and bi-annual management style surveys with questions based on agreed management competencies and culture surveys. All surveys are followed by 'You said, we did' feedback.
- College Improvement Days as 'stop the track' days for continuous improvement staff development activity.
- Academic Board, chaired by the Principal, with approximately 30 elected representatives from across the college who play a key part in shaping the College mission and strategy.
- Working parties on numerous issues such as charitable fundraising, safeguarding and Staff Wellbeing. Staff contribute their expertise and take an opportunity for personal and professional growth.
- A Health and Safety Consultative Committee, comprising approximately 20 staff and 2 students, meeting at least termly and advising senior managers on all aspects of health and safety.
- Joint Consultative Meetings, held for the purposes of collective bargaining, positive consultation and communication between college management and recognised trade unions.
- A Self-Assessment process involving all teams in the college in gathering evidence on their own performance in a report validated by a Principal's panel and followed up by an action plan for improvement.
- A Staff Handbook/Corporate Intranet so that all staff can be fully informed about key college information including the mission, annual theme, strategic objectives, facilities, services and terms and conditions.

- A team structure meaning that all staff belong to their own improvement team which meet regularly to celebrate successes and ensure plans are on track.
- Performance Management for all staff linking their personal performance and targets to the strategic objectives for the college. This empowers all staff to maximise their performance and fully participate in the success of the college.
- Focus groups held periodically with selected staff or volunteers to gain focused feedback. Topics have included equality and diversity, professional development and recruitment and selection.
- A New staff mentor event. All staff have a mentor and three times a year they are invited to attend a formal meal in the College restaurant with senior managers to thank their mentors, meet other new staff, celebrate their arrival in the college and to seek their feedback on the recruitment process.
- Exit interviews held with all staff who are leaving to share their experiences of work at Runshaw. Feedback is shared with line managers and senior managers to help them improve our employment practices.

Staff can see the difference they can make to the life of the college from a rewriting of the values, and the annual theme through to the reorganisation of the staff lounge and the organisation of fun events such as the annual Runshaw Run and Ramble. Over the last 15 years the value of employee engagement has been evidenced by a number of improvements to our staff satisfaction results and other key staffing data.

#### **Notable Performance Indicators**

Sickness absence has fallen significantly to 2.1% in 2010-11 which equates to on average, 4.54 working days lost per employee due to sickness. This compares very favourably to industry and the FE sector. In the latter, staff lost an average of 8.9 working days due to sickness (4.1%) in 2010. The open culture means people feel comfortable in discussing their health-related and work-life balance needs with managers.

Over the last six years, staff turnover rates have fallen from 16.8% to 8.8% which compares favourably to the FE sector rate of 14.5% in 2011.

The staff culture survey has consistency shown high levels of staff satisfaction which was supported by the IIP re-assessment in 2010. The College was proud to achieve the highest award possible, the prestigious Gold Investors in People award, as part of the New Choices Framework. To achieve Gold, the college had to meet at least 165 out of 196 indicators and to its absolute delight, the College was awarded top marks, 196 out of 196. Runshaw College believes this to be the highest ever score and knows it now joins an elite group of just 1% of organisations who have achieved Gold IIP.

